

[Transcript] The Rest Is Politics / 130. Question Time: Bumping into Boris Johnson, the Hong Kong handover, and One-nation Tories vs. Blairites

Thank you for listening to The Restless Politics for ad-free listening, early access to episodes, membership to our chat community. Please sign up at TheRestlessPolitics.com.

Or if you're listening on Apple Podcast, you can subscribe within the app in just a few clicks.

Welcome to The Restless Politics, Question Time with me, Rory Stewart.

And me, Alistair Campbell. Now here's the first one, Rory. Rudolph Hucker.

How long are manifestos valid for? Are they actually worth the paper they're written on?

Or are they more an aspirational wish list that can be ignored a week after the election as, quote, circumstances have changed or, quote, the state of finances was worse than we expected?

Well, they are things that obviously matter because they can be used.

They can be used a great deal in terms of the civil service.

We've talked about some of the problems of ministers and civil servants, but where civil servants are very clear is that if something's in a manifesto, they're very clear that they need to deliver it.

And one of the easiest ways of getting policy through as a minister is if you can say it's in the manifesto,

and it's sometimes quite difficult getting policy through that isn't in the manifesto from that point of view.

It matters also in terms of the House of Lords.

There's a convention the House of Lords doesn't block legislation that's in the manifesto.

And it also can be used by the whips to impose a three-line whip on members to say, look, this was in the manifesto you've got to vote it through, although that doesn't always work, because often the MPs will point out quite rightly, and this is one of the paradoxes, that the manifesto is written secretly, they're not informed about it, and it's released a few days before the general election,

and most of the MPs are campaigning without having had a chance to really read the manifesto.

Yeah, but I think that the process of manifesto development is pretty long.

We had a process in 97, we had a document called The Road to the Manifesto, which was, it was partly a campaigning document, but it was also a policy document.

And look, I think we're back to one of our favourite, well not favourite, but one of our most regular topics of the impact of populism, and in particular in our country of Johnson.

If you have somebody who puts at the centre of the manifesto his oven-ready deal, which turns out to be nothing like an oven-ready deal,

and on so many other issues, basically says,

well, that was then, this is now, everything's changed, nothing matters.

I can remember when in 2001, before we started planning the 2001 campaign, we did a line-by-line analysis of our manifesto, and we worked out,

I think it was well over 80% that we had managed to deliver

of the central promises that we'd made, and including a lot of quite so-called small issues.

So I think it should matter, and I think that I completely agree with you, as well as the constitutional role, the Lords etc.

I think actually having manifestos can be what give a government its sense of direction, and that's why what Labour is doing now is so, so important in terms of what they do as a

[Transcript] The Rest Is Politics / 130. Question Time: Bumping into Boris Johnson, the Hong Kong handover, and One-nation Tories vs. Blairites

government.

Well, one of the most controversial ones that hit my life very strongly was Theresa May in 2017, trying to deal with the biggest scandal in British public life even today, which is adult social care.

In other words, we created the NHS, we never completed it by providing proper care for the frail elderly, many people in my constituency being seen 15 minutes in a day, which is barely long enough to change someone, let alone sit with them or help them get a meal. Tried to put in the manifesto an idea that you could take money from people's homes because that's another problem in Britain, which is the huge discrepancy and wealth between the people who own property and the people that don't, the 60% who own property, who tend to be older and much, much better off than young people who don't own property.

Tried to put those two things together and took an enormous potential majority. She was on course for a 230-seat majority into an election on the basis that manifesto largely ended up in a situation where she didn't secure a majority at all and crippled the whole Brexit process from then onwards.

I thought you were going to mention the Labour attack.

That was what they called the death tax, wasn't it?

Exactly, yeah.

And I was disappointed by that because I thought Jeremy Corbyn would actually work cross-party on adult social care and could see the arguments around this.

But I guess he, in the end, had more of the ruthless politician in him than I perhaps acknowledged.

That is a very, very good example of where I guess she was thinking of trying to do the right thing for the long term, but short term politically.

It did, as you say, a massive amount of damage.

Andy O'Brien here.

Do you have any thoughts on free ports, which is so-called Brexit benefit, and the T-side free port, which is being excellently investigated by Private Eye, does there appear to be something dodgy going on?

Now, this is really interesting because I'm reading a book at the moment called Crack Up Capitalism, which relates to the book I often mention about and have written about the sovereign individual.

And it's focused on all these particularly Chinese investments around the world, but where these special zones are being created that essentially become free of democratic and economic controls that have democratic underpinning.

And that I have always felt is what this whole free port thing Charter City Movement is about.

And it is interesting to me that Private Eye seems to be virtually solo looking into this and have coming up with some absolutely eye-popping revelations, which the rest of the media just seem to ignore.

These are fascinating things, aren't they?

I think the Chinese influence is clear.

[Transcript] The Rest Is Politics / 130. Question Time: Bumping into Boris Johnson, the Hong Kong handover, and One-nation Tories vs. Blairites

The big examples of this were originally these special economic zones created near Hong Kong, places like Shenzhen, which were the part of Deng Xiaoping from the early 1980s, liberalizing the Chinese economy.

And he basically said that these areas would be outside normal Chinese communist control to allow them to develop.

And they were incredibly successful.

And I guess the idea of these movements, they were also championed by a chief economist, the World Bank, who was very keen on them, is that you could create little Hong Kong's or little Singapore's, which could become these kinds of capitalist dream situations with very, very little regulation, very business friendly, where you could make these big dramatic investment decisions.

I mean, traditionally, two problems, one of them, as you pointed out, is that, of course, by circumventing the normal regulations and constraints, you potentially get into big problems on environmental stuff, because that's often what's holding back these investments, is people's concerns about the environmental impact.

And the second thing, of course, the Treasury would say, is that often they simply displace economic activity that a smarter move is, if you've got a real problem with over-regulation, is to get rid of that regulation across the whole country, so the economy, the whole country, can grow, rather than just doing it in these isolated geographical areas.

Here's a question for you.

Julian Ray, as you're both well placed to answer this, what are some of the key ideological differences between a traditional Blairite and a one-nation Conservative, both of whom claim to occupy the centre ground in contemporary British politics?

Well, I can't possibly speak for one-nation Conservatives.

I've seen there are...

I suppose the...

What New Labour was trying to do was to bring together the sense of economic efficiency and a commitment to a well-functioning market economy alongside values and principles that related to what is broadly called social justice.

So a belief that the state can achieve social justice, a belief that you don't just leave everything to the market.

And I think it's...

I think within that, it's a kind of...

It's a question of scale.

And I think it's interesting, when I listen to you, you know, defending yourself has still affected you to be a Conservative.

It always feels to me that a lot of it is about cultural and historical stuff as opposed to actual workings of the modern economy.

I think on a lot of that, I think we'd find that we'd agree, but I think we'd disagree probably in areas of...

[Transcript] The Rest Is Politics / 130. Question Time: Bumping into Boris Johnson, the Hong Kong handover, and One-nation Tories vs. Blairites

Possibly in areas of tax and spend, possibly of areas in relation to the prioritisation of public services, and in particular, in my case, in my view, education, the need to make education for the many a goal of the nation, etc.

So I think it's...

They're in broadly the same centre part of the ground.

I think there is a centre left and a centre right, but some of the values are the same.

Is that fair?

Yeah, I think so.

We played out in the podcast, don't we?

Because people sometimes tease us and say, you're not really disagreeing agreeably that much.

You agree on too much.

And it's true.

I mean, there was an article in the...

I think it's in the spectator pointing out that broadly speaking, you know, we agree on the European Union.

We both, you know, were people who voted against Brexit and can both see the damage of this.

We're both passionately anti-Boris Johnson.

But I think that disguises some significant disagreements.

I think being passionately anti-Boris Johnson is just a sensible thing that most people in the United Kingdom should feel almost regardless of what political party they come from.

It's worth bearing in mind that these centrist positions are connected to political parties.

So Tony Blair still had to navigate the history of the Labour Party, the culture of the Labour Party, the left wing of the Labour Party.

And David Cameron, Theresa May, still had to navigate the right wing of the Conservative Party and the traditions of the Conservative Party.

And that means that tonally, they end up being a bit different.

So you will tend to hear the Labour Party being much more sympathetic, for example, towards strike action.

Even if Keir Starmer himself won't come out clearly for it, you'll hear in the tone of what surrounds him that he'll be more sympathetic towards strikes.

Again, the Conservatives will tend to be more sympathetic, even on the centre, towards the idea of deregulation, efficiency, being pro-business, being in favour of smaller government.

So yeah, we're all in favour of pragmatically regulated free market.

We're all trying to balance social justice, compassion and market economics.

But I think the left-right split remains in the way that we view the world.

And I think it's also part of the secret is in the word Conservative, which is that Conservative centrists tend to be still a little bit suspicious of radical change, not very revolutionary, inclined to believe in gentle evolution, with a lot of respect

[Transcript] The Rest Is Politics / 130. Question Time: Bumping into Boris Johnson, the Hong Kong handover, and One-nation Tories vs. Blairites

for the past and history.

There's a lot of, if it ain't broke, don't fix it going on in the Conservative tradition, which maybe isn't so much there in the Labour tradition.

No, and that's why I think when you keep saying that you think I'm becoming more left-wing, I think it's probably that, that I actually think that we do need a pretty big shake-up of an awful lot of things.

And when we were talking about Canada in the main podcast, there's a debate going on in Canada at the moment about whether the Liberal Party, Trudeau's party, which is centre-left, should actually do some sort of formal or informal pre-electoral tie-up with the New Democratic Party, a little bit like the discussion going on now between Labour and the Lib Dems.

Now here's back to the coronation, Rory.

Wuchel, thinking of the coronation, what were the official engagements you were forced to sit through that made you feel most uncomfortable, annoyed, or gave you the ick?

Do you know about the ick?

Obviously.

Of course, giving you the ick.

Giving you the ick.

But my daughter Grace does a whole sketch about the ick.

The ick is basically stuff that gets on your nerves.

The French would say au mer des, probably.

What would the Germans say?

Oh, my God.

Maybe to the Germans never.

Maybe nothing gets on the Germans' nerves.

Oh, it does, it does, it does.

Well, listen, I'll think about the German while we're talking.

But tell me, I've got one that is so, really, even thinking about it now gives me a headache.

You go first.

Mine is Prime Minister's questions.

Nothing made me more disgusted, uncomfortable than both sides roaring the often incredibly trivial questions.

You know, I'd be desperate for somebody to ask about some big national or international issue and somebody standing up saying, well, the Prime Minister congratulate my local football team on there, this and the other.

And I just felt it was the most kind of trivial, embarrassing, badly behaved disgrace that and it was right at the heart of the British political system.

So that was my least favorite part of every week.

Well, the one that came to my mind when I was, when I saw that question was the Hong Kong handover, I felt deeply uncomfortable throughout the whole thing.

Partly because he was pissing with rain.

I was, I don't know why, because I tried to avoid those things.

I didn't think I should be placed in the sort of official setup.

I think I was alongside, I think I was near William Hagan, Paddy Ashton.

[Transcript] The Rest Is Politics / 130. Question Time: Bumping into Boris Johnson, the Hong Kong handover, and One-nation Tories vs. Blairites

And I'd spend most of the day with your good friend, now King Charles.

That's my only time I've ever been on Britannia.

And also with Chris Patton, who was in a very, very grumpy mood all day and kept talking about Dewhurst, the Butchers, the Chinese.

But it just felt, it really felt strange.

And then I think I may have told you before, I found this watching on as these Chinese soldiers were there, all terrifyingly, exactly the same height, looking incredibly disciplined and incredibly strong.

And it just felt like a very, very sort of weird, sad day.

So I didn't enjoy that at all.

I was there too.

And I remember, I remember the rain and I was in the, I wasn't in the posh box you were in.

I was standing in the rain at the other side of the stadium, but it was a pretty, pretty extraordinary day.

Lisa, you got to the coronation though, Rory.

I didn't get invited to the coronation.

Got to the coronation.

Speaking of which, question for you from John Gorman.

Just before that, I think, I think, sorry, I think the Germans, I don't know about German worth of the eight, but I think they would say, desigit mir auf die Nerven.

It gets on my nerves.

I think that's what they say.

It gets on my nerves.

Gosh.

Oh, that sounds very sort of strangely literal, literally according to the English.

Yeah.

Well, I could be right.

Any German listeners who know a translation of the egg.

One big word.

Yeah.

I was looking for one enormously long word that you could produce.

Okay.

John Gorman, the king's champion featured in the coronation.

In previous times, he would ride a horse into the coronation banquet, throw down his gauntlets and challenge anyone who doubted the legitimacy of the king.

Which political figure would you pick as your champion to fight your corner if you were king?

You for you first, Gorman.

Who's going to be my champion?

Well, I guess John Prescott had a pretty good, pretty good right hook to me.

It was a left jab.

Left jab.

Was it left jab?

Yeah, left jab.

[Transcript] The Rest Is Politics / 130. Question Time: Bumping into Boris Johnson, the Hong Kong handover, and One-nation Tories vs. Blairites

Yeah.

Now, John would definitely be a good champion, but John, John would, you know, I think this needs to be somebody who's got a sort of, I want them to be elegant and eloquent and possibly carry a sword.

So I think I'm going to do a cross party and go for Penny Morton.

I think Penny Morton would be my champion.

Penny Morton.

How about The Rock?

No, not into The Rock.

Not into The Rock?

No.

Okay.

Burnley, by the way, we've just had a big investment in from a guy called JJ Watt, who apparently is one of the greatest NFL players of all time, American footballer.

So he could be a good champion.

He's very big and he's quite rockish.

See, I'll go for JJ Watt.

No, I'm going to go for Ashley Barnes.

Ashley Barnes.

What do you think of that, Rory?

Ashley Barnes.

Ashley Barnes sounds very good.

I'm going to be strongly approving of Ashley Barnes.

Why would that be?

I have no idea because he sounds like a footballer, doesn't he?

He's just played his last game for Burnley and he's been an absolute legend of the club for the last 10 years.

I'm going for Ashley Barnes as my champion.

And you're not going to go for huge Scandinavians who score goals against Burnley?

No.

Because you remember that, don't you?

You do remember that.

No, I'm definitely not going to go for that.

Chris Harris.

Yeah.

Is it ever awkward bumping into people that you've criticized on the podcast or elsewhere?

For example, if Rory had to bump into Boris Johnson at the King's Coronation, how do you deal with that when you literally bump into people?

I'd find that very, very difficult.

In fact, I actually occasionally have sort of slight nightmares about it because obviously

I worked alongside him closely, worked for him and used to talk to him many times a day.

And I've become so angry with him and so critical of him.

I don't know what would happen if I actually ran into him.

[Transcript] The Rest Is Politics / 130. Question Time: Bumping into Boris Johnson, the Hong Kong handover, and One-nation Tories vs. Blairites

I think probably I'd have to avoid him because I think any conversation would be incredibly stilted and artificial and insincere.

How about you?

I actually have this thought.

Every time I go to the theater, I think, what would I do if I ended up just purely by chance sitting along from Boris Johnson in the theater if he turned up at the theater or at the cinema?

And I think what I'd do is just before the play started when they came out and said, switch off your mobile phones, I would stand up and say a few years ago, there was a referendum in this country and there was a vote of people.

I would like to have a vote of people in this theater who would prefer that the person who led that campaign was not in the same audience and did not contaminate the play by his presence.

We have a vote.

I'd like to do that.

Is that childish?

Well, that's quite aggressive.

Goodness, that is quite an aggressive move.

Are there other people that you've had such a bad relationship with that you just avoid them?

You'd rather not speak to them.

How about Andrew Gilligan?

How about if you found yourself...

Oh, that's a good one.

That's a very good one, actually.

No, I actually did find myself in his company.

I think it was...

It might even have been a Tory party conference because I was there talking about alcoholism or something.

And I went to a meeting.

It might be in Labour.

I can't remember.

It was in Bournemouth.

And I noticed he was there, so I decided just to ignore him.

But then he sort of sidled up alongside me and was trying to get a conversation going and I completely ignored him.

And then he wrote a piece saying, you know, can't we let bygones be bygones?

Kind of thing.

No, something like him, I would never give the time of day.

But I wouldn't feel uncomfortable about sort of being in his presence.

I think you've got to...

You know, the fact is, when we debate stuff and we're, you know, with political opponents, I think it's...

You know this.

I mean, it's like a question time.

People can sort of tear lumps off each other and they sort of go out for dinner with David

[Transcript] The Rest Is Politics / 130. Question Time: Bumping into Boris Johnson, the Hong Kong handover, and One-nation Tories vs. Blairites

and then we'll be off here in a breeze or whatever.

So I think you've just got to rise above it, really.

I'm sure there are lots of people who avoid me like the plague, but, you know, let them get on with it.

Very good.

Right.

And it's a lot more questions to come.

So let's just take a quick break.

Here's a very serious question.

So Donna Mooney on IPP sentences, maybe just before the question, very quickly to explain this.

The sentence is imprisonment for public protection.

David Blunkett in 2003 as the Labour Home Secretary introduced a sentence where people could be given an indefinite sentence.

It wasn't a life sentence, but it was a sentence where you were sent to prison and it could be for quite a small offense, but you were then not allowed to be released from prison without special permission from the parole board and you could be recalled immediately to prison for any minor breach because you remained on licence when you left.

Quickly on her question, she's pointed out that the population has increased for the first time since it was abolished in 2012.

So 10 years ago, the Conservatives said they're no longer going to allow these sentences to be given, but they're not going to take away the sentences from people who got them during the Labour government.

So the suicides in 2022 were the highest they've ever been in any year since the IPP was produced in 2005.

Do you think a revised action plan as proposed by the government will finally fix the issues and damage being caused?

And her point here is that for IPP prisoners, it is the most horrifying existence because in many cases, it is effectively a life sentence.

There are thousands of people in prison, all but 35 of them have served more than their tariff, so more than the fixed number of months they were supposed to serve.

And they have no idea really under what conditions they're ever going to be released because there's not very transparent information available to them on what they need to do to be allowed out, and they can be recalled very easily.

And therefore, the suicide rate among them can be very, very high.

And Donna Mooney, who's asked the question very sadly, her brother was an IPP prisoner who also died in prison.

Anyway, any thoughts on IPPs?

I mean, Labour brought them in in 2003, as you say, and this is probably because the whole Iraq thing was going on.

I don't have that much of a memory of the process.

And it's interesting.

I assumed that a lot of it would have been to do with prevention of terrorism and such

[Transcript] The Rest Is Politics / 130. Question Time: Bumping into Boris Johnson, the Hong Kong handover, and One-nation Tories vs. Blairites

like, but actually, we're talking mainly about crimes of violence and often sexual offenses.

But it's where the court believes that the offence doesn't merit a life sentence, but the offender poses a significant risk of serious harm to the public in the future.

But I agree with you.

You're basically, I can't imagine anything worse than being in prison and having no idea even when, as you say, you've served your tariff, the minimum period you have to serve, but then you have no idea how or when you might be able to get released.

And I think, as you say, the coalition government scrapped it, there have been a number of reviews since then.

And clearly, there are going to be some cases that are very, very, very difficult, but they're still into four figures.

The numbers came down for a while, as you say, they're going back up, but they're still into four figures of people who were sentenced when this the IPP existed and are still in prison, even though the previous government, the coalition government got rid of it.

So it's something that I think we should be pushing both the current Conservative Lord Chancellor and any future Labour government to abolish and also get rid of it on the people whom it was inflicted on, because it's totally against fundamental principles of law.

You're supposed to be able to be prosecuted and convicted and serve your tariff, and when you've served your tariff, you get released.

And what this is allowing to happen is people to serve longer sentences than is laid down in law for them to actually serve for the offence they committed.

And essentially, people are being held on the idea that there's some, even though there's no particular crime they've committed, which justifies being held that long, they're just considered inherently so dangerous that they're not being allowed out.

And that's a very, very dangerous precedent.

I'm delighted it was abolished 10 years ago.

And given it's been abolished for anyone since 2012, why don't we abolish it for the people previously?

And also, I just wonder how many of the 1500 or so, whatever it is that are left in this state is how many of them actually the judgment is as much about their mental health as about their propensity for criminal action once they once they get out.

It's very rare that I would give a shout out, Rory, for the House of Lords Library.

But I recommend to people who are interested in this, a paper written by somebody called Nicola Neusen, and I don't know how you get ahold of it, LordsLibrary.parliament.uk.

But there's a very, very good historical account of what is an incredibly complicated area of legislation and one which I think we're agreeing agreeably on this one.

I think the sooner it's gone and dealt with the better.

Dr. Andrew, how to choose a book, second attempt.

Greetings from Uganda.

Very good.

You got them, Lister.

You often both speak of the books you're reading.

I'm curious, how do you find them?

[Transcript] The Rest Is Politics / 130. Question Time: Bumping into Boris Johnson, the Hong Kong handover, and One-nation Tories vs. Blairites

Grazing in airport bookshops, online recommendation sites like Goodreads, personal recommendations from friends, family or colleagues, formal book reviews.

Where are you getting your book recommendations from?

Well, I hesitate to give the truthful answer because Fiona will be very, very cross with me because most days, a book or books will arrive in the post, unrequested.

And it's got worse since the podcast, Rory.

I'm not sure if they send them to you in Jordan because the postage is probably too expensive, but I get sent so many books.

And I would reckon I read about 10% of them.

And then other books, I love picking up books in airport bookshops.

I love going to little independent bookshops and finding things that aren't there.

But generally, at the moment, because I'm currently, as you know, obsessed with German, and I'm actually about to go and make a speech about the importance of learning foreign languages, I go to Foyle's Foreign Languages section, which is up on one of the high floors and I can while away a nice couple of hours in there and walk out with half a dozen books.

Very good.

Well, I think in my case, a lot of it is to do with a reference in a book that I'm reading. So if I'm reading a book that, for example, I'm reading a book at the moment that does a chapter on Thomas Aquinas and I'll suddenly think, oh my goodness, I know nothing about Thomas Aquinas.

And I do a lot of this in Kindle.

So then I'll buy a book on Thomas Aquinas and I'll start reading about him.

And then I'll think, oh, no, I don't really understand about St. Augustine.

And so I actually, my reading is a sort of rabbit hole where every book I read then makes me buy another book to try to fill out gaps in my knowledge.

That's good. Well, the one that I mentioned that I'm reading, crack up capitalism, I'm reading that because somebody said to me, you should read this book because it relates to all that stuff you keep banging on about the sovereign individual. So there's a book that was written in 1997 and somebody says to me, read a book that's just been published now.

So, yeah, there's loads of different ways of getting it.

Airport Bookstores also, I think, is a shout out.

I mean, the brilliant book that I got on Ulster Protestants that I've been recommending on the podcast I found in Belfast Airport Bookshop.

I think it's actually, particularly when you're traveling abroad, there are often the bookshops are very good at curating some of the most famous books on the particular country you're in.

It's always worth having a look at that.

Yeah, and I have to say, Roy, I've noticed that whenever in my maladaptively competitive way, I have a little look on how the book is doing on the new book is doing on Amazon. I've noticed that in the thing about people who viewed this book also viewed and people who bought this book also bought yours,

[Transcript] The Rest Is Politics / 130. Question Time: Bumping into Boris Johnson, the Hong Kong handover, and One-nation Tories vs. Blairites

which is out in September, is already being married by the algorithm to mine.
So there is a real danger that we sort of morph into one human being at one point that could be quite scary for the world.

That would be quite scary.

I think we need to have, gosh, that is a bit scary.

I don't want to sort of envisage that as a sort of some strange kind of centaur with my horse's head on top of your large body.

Well, listen, related to that, John Ellis, my question is, how many kilts do you both own?

And Rory, do you own at least one pair of jeans?

I know it's not the most in-depth question, but the world needs to know.

That's from John Ellis in Bordeaux.

That's very kind, John.

So I own three kilts, two Pezzatartan trees and five sporins and one pair of jeans.

So Rory Stewart has five times more sporins than jeans.

I have two kilts, one of which just about fits me and one of which doesn't.

I have three sporins, but only one of them is functional.

And I probably have about, I don't have any Levi old denim jeans, but I have quite a lot of what I think you would define as jeans.

And I have no Tartan trues and I don't think I could ever be seen in Tartan trues.

And I will never be seen in those, you know, those shots, those those trousers that a lot of rich, tough, aristotypes wear that you never ever see them in shops.

Those kind of orange, purple, I've never ever seen them in a shop.

There's a regular that tailor that you told those red trouser things.

Yeah, I mean, God, I wouldn't be seen dead in those.

Well, there's famously in the it's a it's a faction,

the Conservative Party called the Red Trouser Brigade that my colleagues were always always talking about. Who's in it?

Well, it's usually it was usually considered to be sort of Brexiteers were meant to be the Red Trouser Brigade.

So I guess it's people like Richard L.

and the Plunkett Drax would be an example.

I can't imagine Steve Baker in Red Trousers.

No, no, no, he's different, different, different bit of the Brexit, different bit of the Brexit coalition.

OK, so I think we're sort of coming towards the end.

I have a nice little Pristian question.

Go on then, Pristian question for our last question.

Emma Ross, I clean the house when I'm listening to the rest of his politics.

And due to the aroma of a cleaning product I use,

it always triggers a picture or memory of Rory and Alistair.

What scent provokes a strong memory or emotional response for you and why?

Gosh, well, in my case, it was the scent in the bathroom on our honeymoon.

[Transcript] The Rest Is Politics / 130. Question Time: Bumping into Boris Johnson, the Hong Kong handover, and One-nation Tories vs. Blairites

And it had geranium in it.

And for some reason, whenever I smell that, I think very, very strongly of the honeymoon that Shashana and I took, which was in the Himalayas. Mine is a lot less romantic.

Whenever I smell freshly mown grass, I have a visual flashback to a cricket match that I played in when I was about 10.

And it's a specific cricket match.

Yeah, very good.

Now, as this is called the rest of his politics, I'm going to finish with a political question.

Having said, I didn't have another question.

Andrew McNeil, Alistair, your perspectives on the Good Friday Agreement are very interesting, but I'd like to hear you talk more about John Hume and any interactions you have.

And so quickly remind the listeners who John Hume was and then tell us about what you thought of him.

Oh, John Hume was a wonderful man and he was the leader of the STLP, the Social Democrat Labour Party.

He really was one of the absolute people to talk about the architects of the peace process in Northern Ireland.

Jerry Adams, in our interview with him on Leading, talked about what became known as the Hume-Adams Plan.

John Hume rightly got the Nobel Peace Prize along with David Trimble.

And I've got two very, very powerful memories of John.

And they both relate actually to his essential optimism.

He was always the guy who whatever else was going on basically had this sense that humanity was going to prevail and it was all going to work out.

It was all going to sort of work out in the end.

And I also remember the first time we went to Derry with him and Tony was making a speech and it was it was pretty tense.

It was still very tense.

Those early trips to Northern Ireland when Tony was first Prime Minister.

And John Hume had so many people that he'd clearly said that, you know, they would get to meet Tony.

And so we kept saying, you know, how long does this go?

How long do you think you'll need for this meeting?

And how long is it going to be fine?

Just a few minutes will be fine.

We sort of get there.

And then, you know, there's these dozens and dozens and dozens of people he wants to he wants to meet and he wanted Tony to meet.

[Transcript] The Rest Is Politics / 130. Question Time: Bumping into Boris Johnson, the Hong Kong handover, and One-nation Tories vs. Blairites

But a lovely, lovely man and, you know, absolutely without it without him, not sure we'd have ever got over the line.
And there's a lovely picture in, sadly, my Irish diary is only sold in Ireland.
But there's a wonderful picture in there of Tony, Trimble and Hume sitting on this bench under a tree.
And it was when we were over for the referendum campaign.
And it's one of those really kind of I can't even remember who took the picture, but it's very, very candid because they don't it's like they're not they don't realize they're being photographed.
And they're all just sort of it's just like washing three blokes on a bench.
Have a little bit of a rest.
And it's a it's a that.
So they're the sort of some of the images that come into my head, John Hume.
Well, we'll make sure we get that image in the newsletter.
And thank you very much.
And good luck with this week and the promotion of but what can I do?
I can't wait to what we get to to you.
What's yours? What's yours?
Call again across the course of politics on the edge policies on the edge.
Yeah. I'm going to I'm going to deliver it in exactly the same tone.
So, you know, just do it again.
But what can I do? Just do it again?
How you do it? What can I do?
And I'm going to do and your book politics on the edge.
Very good. Is that OK?
Beautiful, beautiful, beautiful.
All right. OK. See you next week.
All the rest. Bye bye. Bye bye.